

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE  
HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR,  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION AND RELATED AGENCIES  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE**

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**Summary**

This testimony will update the Subcommittee on the status of America's libraries, recent reauthorizations passed by Congress, as well as the potential impact of the President's FY 2005 budget request for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program at the Department of Education.

Federal support for these programs encourages improved efficiencies and cost-effectiveness of library services, enhances shared public access to information, promotes the use of technology, encourages the sharing of resources, and other collaborations and outreach not feasible across local and state boundaries alone.

During these difficult economic times when local and state cuts deter such resource sharing and innovation, this support is even more critical. Libraries in nearly every state are reporting the deepest budget cuts in their history. The impacts of these funding cuts range from reductions in services and operating hours to layoffs and library closures. Only by including \$232 million for the LSTA and \$100 million for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill will we ensure that library patrons of all ages have sufficient access to library and information services, support recruiting and educating the next generation of librarians, and provide libraries the resources they need to improve literacy skills and academic achievement.

Good morning. Chairman Regula and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. On behalf of the millions of library patrons nationwide, the over

139,000 libraries and the 395,000 librarians and other library personnel currently in the United States that the American Library Association represents, I am pleased to have the opportunity to update the Committee on the status of America's libraries and discuss the potential impact of the President's Fiscal Year 2005 budget on library programs at the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Department of Education.

First, I would first like to say thank you Mr. Chairman and the Committee for your continued support for our nation's libraries. As you know, last year, prior to becoming law, Congress voted overwhelmingly in support of the Museum and Library Services Act. As part of that Act, Congress reauthorized the Library Services and Technology Act or LSTA, the only federal program exclusively for libraries and administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Given the growing demands placed on today's libraries, we were pleased that Congress increased the LSTA authorization level to \$232 million for FY 2004. This Committee responded in kind, by providing \$198 million for LSTA. While short of the authorized level of \$232 million, the level necessary to raise the base grant to each state from \$340,000 to \$680,000, it was a significant increase over FY 2003 and will help build capacity and expand core services at libraries nationwide.

I would be remiss, if I also didn't thank the Committee for their continued funding for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program as well, which is part of the No Child Left Behind Act and a critical partner in the President's comprehensive effort to significantly improve student literacy skills.

Libraries include institutions of all types and sizes, such as public, academic, research, school, and state libraries – even digital libraries. Libraries are found in cities, suburbs and rural areas large and small; they serve people from all walks of life, from “infancy to old age.” They form the information and education backbone in this country, both in our communities and in our schools.

During these difficult economic times, libraries in nearly every state are reporting the deepest budget cuts in their history. The impacts of these funding cuts range from reductions in services and operating hours to layoffs and library closures.

With cuts at the state and local level, federal support becomes even more critical. Around the country, knowledgeable librarians use LSTA funding to help patrons access essential information on a wide range of topics. They offer training on résumé development; help on web searches of job banks; workshops on career information; links to essential educational and community services; assistive devices for people with disabilities; family literacy classes; homework help and mentoring programs; access to government information, and so much more. As a result, total visits to the library have increased by more than 17 percent between 1996 and 2001.

*In Ohio, LSTA funding is used to support the Moving Ohio's Resources Everywhere, a statewide resource sharing network that brings library patrons more resources, more books, more music, and more videos. It provides access to over 50 million items in Ohio's public and school libraries with only a couple of keystrokes. The desired material is then delivered to a library via the statewide delivery network. In short, because of LSTA, any library user can now request an item*

*from any Ohio library and check it out from the user's home library -- whether that home library is a public, school, academic, or special library.*

Thanks to LSTA, libraries are also working to close the “digital divide” in many of our nation’s distressed communities by providing no fee, public access to computers and the Internet. Today, due to increased resources by the Congress and improved efforts by libraries across the country, more than 95 percent of library buildings offer public Internet access – an increase of more than 67 percent since 1996. However, although Internet use has increased substantially in the United States, nearly half of all American households still do not have computers or Internet access. Those who remain unconnected are two to three times more likely to rely on library computers.

While we were pleased with the proposed increase for LSTA in the President’s FY 2005 budget, funding LSTA at the recently authorized level of \$232 million would help libraries meet their needs at a time when they are trying to serve a growing number of customers while facing severe cut backs in state and local funding. With 47 percent of librarians expected to reach retirement age by 2008, this request would also provide essential funding for the recruitment and education of a new generation of library professionals.

With the creation of the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries, Congress recognized the critical role libraries play in improving student literacy. This program provides students and schools with up-to-date reading material and technology so students can increase their literacy skills and develop a life-long love for reading. Moreover, it provides professional development for school librarians, increase collaborations among teachers and librarians, and expands access to the school library during non-school hours.

Multiple studies have affirmed that there is a clear link between the quality of library media programs in schools staffed by an experienced school library media specialist and student academic achievement. A recent study conducted by the Ohio Department of Education found that nearly 95% of students say that school libraries, its services and librarians, have helped them significantly in their learning.

In the face of an expanding school population, the proposed budget simply cannot stretch to meet the critical needs and demands of school libraries, which are already underfunded. We urge you to significantly boost funding for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program to \$100 million. At this level, we can expand the reach of this critical effort to every state.

The Library Services and Technology Act and the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program provide critical funding for libraries of all kinds nationwide. Only by including \$232 million for the LSTA and \$100 million for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program in FY 2005 will we ensure that library patrons of all ages have sufficient access to library and information services, support recruiting and educating the next generation of librarians, and provide libraries the resources they need to improve literacy skills and academic achievement.

Again, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to testify today.